

How does the planning process affect Maori land use?

The recent claim to the Waitangi Tribunal regarding the Manukau Harbour lands has pointed to an inadequate planning process amongst other things.

One recommendation asked that the Crown be bound by planning procedures just like the private citizen so that bureaucratic sidestepping of the laws could not continue.

However one of the few Maori planners, George Asher, believes this is not the way to go about righting the past or the future.

He says it is both naive and unreasonable to expect the Crown to be bound by laws under all circumstances. He says the Crown needs to be flexible to adapt to changing conditions, if it is bound by law it would also be necessary to be able to legislate its way out.

That's not to say the Crown isn't guided by existing policy, just that binding the Crown by legislation to certain commitments is not the long-term answer.

George says there must be pre-requisites to ensuring that Maori values are part of the process and consideration of policy commitments.

He's more confident of these checks looking after Maori interests in the future than he is of trying to redress the past.

One thing he's grateful to such claims as the Manukau one is that it puts on the record the irrefutable evidence of the legacy of lack of consultation and ignorance of a Maori perspective in planning and resource administration today.

"We're saying it's influenced our circumstances now and we don't want it to happen again. We want the system to be accountable."

George says there is a total unawareness today in some major decision makers of this country and the recommendations of the Waitangi Tribunal aren't sought out by them. He says the information must be put through the formal process, in the training of town planners, administrators, managers and those who will make decisions about our lifestyle and environment.

George Asher says it's like a question put to him by a koroua at a hui in Taumarunui. He wanted to know how



to get through all the red tape surrounding planning procedures.

George says Maoris take a take to the system and it usually won't listen, until we give a complete history lesson and then it may listen.

"We're filling in the inadequacies of the education training system and we're expected to do this in five minutes before the door closes. On top of that we're often charged for it, in the way of legal fees."

It's still early days in planning in New Zealand according to George who's spent five years in situations where it's been possible to assess the country's Maori perspective in planning. He says since his recent move from the NZ Planning Council to the Department of Maori Affairs, the Ministry of Works (a major planning body) has made some new appointments and requirements regarding a Maori perspective for its staff.

"But it's a superficial high in terms of Maori values that the country is seeing," says George, reflected in the bandying about of such words as 'multi-cultural' and 'equal opportunity'.

"I was recently at Motunui and one of the aunties at the marae told me they couldn't offer me any local mussels because the beds were polluted. Now the case the Atiawa people took to the Waitangi Tribunal was meant to have resolved that."

And George says at the same time as the Maori people talk of continuing abuses, the planning people laud the heightened awareness brought about by the Waitangi Tribunal hearing.

They point to the great publicity that Atiawa and Aila Taylor received and equate that with great progress says George. They forget that it was because of ignorance on their part that the hearing took place at Maori expense.

George says Motunui is a good example of how the planning process works. The energy plant is expected to comply with the conditions set down, just like an ordinary citizen.

"But if in future there is a greater energy demand then in simple terms we rezone to enable sufficient supply of useable land to meet that demand."

George says this then opens it all up again to objections and those who know how to use the planning process best.

Pakiwaitara

The Old Net

by Rayma Ritchie

The news of the arrival of the great white bird reached them as they were deliberating.

"It has happened as you saw it, Matakite, the bird has reached our shores bringing with it upheaval in our land. The first bird flew from us but this one will not go away. It is time to act."

"That is easy to say, Inaianei, but we must not be hasty. Many birds are lost because the hunter strikes before the time is right. We must consider the paths open to us."

"There is nothing in our past to help us," said Muanga. "I see the first white bird. It touched our shores, drank and departed. Our ancestors came, used the land but followed the sacred rites to protect our food supplies."

"The tapu will be broken," said Matakite. "Our people will change. I see and what I see will happen." He shook his head sorrowfully and the red feathers in his topknot fluttered. "We cannot change the future, perhaps we can delay it. Perhaps the delay will make the transition easier for our people. The seasons change, the Karaka berries ripen. If we treat them correctly, the food sustains us; if the traditional method is not used we die."

"You are right, Matakite" said Muanga. "We came to this land, and peacefully swallowed the first walkers of our forests. They became blood of our blood. In time that will happen to us. Is that what you see?"

"That must not happen," said Inaianei, agitated. "We are the people of the land, we walk tall in the forests, we fish rightfully in the lakes and sea. No great white bird and its offspring should drive us from our land. We are the land."

"In the past," said Muanga "we learnt from the land by making mistakes in its use. Perhaps these fledglings will work the same way."

"Will they listen to us, will they learn quickly the sacred way?"

"They will bring strange ways," said Matakite.

"Some of our people will be blinded by the attractive glitter of their possessions and evil will be done because of that. I see great wounds in our land, I hear the ugly sound of death and destruction. But some of us will learn great things from the strangers and together, we and they, will try to build one good house. They too will become blood of our blood."

"But not today, not here and now," pleaded Inaianei. "Can you say that the time is right?"

"I cannot say that" said Muranga.